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A Hermit's Wild Friends.¹—The first impulse of a reviewer on reading this book is to rage and to utter vain things. There is something peculiarly irritating in the cock-sureness and the condescension of ignorance; there mingles, no doubt, with our zeal for the defense of truth a little of the wrath of the orthodox prophet against him who would lead the people after false gods and therefore after a false prophet. If it were only a question of the scientific world, it would be hardly necessary to pay any attention to the book, but the reviews quoted by the publishers show how easily the general press are mislead. The Hermit is hailed as a second Thoreau, or put before Thoreau, since he “spares us Thoreau’s philosophy.” One reviewer admits that there is much “out-of-the-way information,” but is convinced that it all bears “the stamp of truth.” Another reviewer assures us gravely that the book never goes “beyond the observed facts.” It is rather against an unscrupulous publisher and irresponsible reviewers that our wrath should be directed; the Hermit’s sins are those of ignorance and vanity; the publisher’s are those of greed.

The book purports to give true and detailed records of intimacies with wild animals of the Gloucester woods, where the author has lived for years. He has numbered among his intimates, song sparrows, chewinks and chickadees, squirrels, mice and crows. It will only be necessary to give an extract taken almost at random to show the character of the book. The “Hermit” has found (p. 187) a crippled sparrow and has been feeding him in his camp in the woods. “The fourth day, while I was feeding him, an old chewink hopped to the loaf of bread [always put out for the birds], and called him. The sparrow did not respond at first, but after awhile hopped over to see what the chewink wanted. He seemed surprised to find the bread, and began at once to help himself. The chewink called him into the bushes. *I suppose he intended to give him an introduction to his family.* The next day the sparrow came into the dooryard alone. He made for the bread and did not look at me. I tried to catch him, but he hopped into the bushes, apparently filled with terror. I think that old chewink had told the sparrow that I was a very bad man. The old fellow might have been jealous, and had frightened the young sparrow, so that he would fly from me in wild alarm. The next time the sparrow visited the yard the

¹ Walton, Mason A. *A Hermit's Wild Friends*. Boston, Dana Estes & Co. [1903]. pp. 1-304.

chewink was with him. They departed together, and three days later I saw the sparrow near the old barn. . . . *It was evident* that the chewink had piloted him three-fourths of a mile to his friends. . . . How did the chewink know where to take the sparrow?" How indeed? The italics are the reviewer's and this passage is commended to the critic who could say that the book never went "beyond assured facts." When we add that the illustrations are in keeping with the text we have done all that is possible to put the public on their guard against this book.

R. H.

The Sino-Australian Continent.—The existence of this continent, first assumed by Neumayr for the Jurassic period, and which was accepted by various subsequent writers for the Cretaceous, and upward in the geological scale to the beginning of the Tertiary, apparently needs restriction with regard to its duration. It now is rendered more or less probable that it was not present at all in the Jurassic period. Lately G. Böhm¹ has demonstrated that, in the region of the Moluccas, Mesozoic marine deposits of European type are largely developed, and are chiefly represented by various horizons of the Jurassic series. Böhm draws the conclusion, "it becomes apparent that a Sino-Australian Jurassic continent, as conceived by Neumayr, did not exist."

On the other side, deposits of Cretaceous age are absent or scarce in this region, so that this old continent might have existed at least during a part of the Cretaceous period. Böhm does not discuss this question, but we must bear in mind that zoögeographical facts positively demand a connection of Australia with eastern Asia, and all evidence tends to show (see H. von Ihering, C. Hadley, H. A. Pilsbry, A. E. Ortmann, M. Weber) that this connection was a broad and important one in pre-Tertiary times, while, during the Tertiary, it became more irregular, and was subject to many changes which amounted frequently to complete interruption, which latter condition prevails at present. The restriction of the Sino-Australian continent to a certain part of the Cretaceous times consequently would meet the postulates both of geology and zoögeography.

A. E. O.

¹ Geologische Ergebnisse einer Reise in den Molukken, in: *Compt. Rend. 9. Congr. Geol.*, Wien., 1904.